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## THE CLASSICAL CONFERENCE OF 1906 IN PHILADELPHIA

### *In Four Parts—Part IV*

The third speaker of the day, Professor Nelson G McCrea, spoke on the Entrance Examinations.

Those who have read Mr Glover's "Studies in Vergil", a book which should be in the working library of every lover of the poet, will recall the tone of the preface. The author is forced to admit "that there is at present a movement in education away from the Classics", but expresses his personal conviction that the surest way to avert the danger is "to appeal to the threatened literature". "Classical study", he says, "must be primarily the study of literature and life, the students must have their attention constantly directed to the human value of what they are reading, and the training of literary instinct must be more generally recognized as a main part of the teacher's work". I am fain to believe that the view thus expressed will presently become the view of all exponents of classical education, that, alike in school and in college, we shall all return to the simple creed that the primary object for which we are working is to secure for our pupils the ability to read and to enjoy (for without enjoyment there will be no desire to continue to read) those masterly descriptions of the various phases of human life which have come down to us in Greek and in Latin. I mean, to be specific, that we shall presently no longer be expected, nor even allowed, without adverse criticism, to make the reading of the text of an author a medium for the study, as an end in itself, of the ancient social organism and its influence upon modern civilization. The histories, for example, of Herodotus and Thucydides, of Livy and Tacitus, are undoubtedly treasure-houses of fascinating facts in many fields of investigation, in history itself, in biography, in topography, in manners and customs. But, as it will be at once conceded that the purpose of a course will control its formal development, it must follow that, however important these facts are in the several fields concerned, they must all be used in a purely subordinate, ancillary, and contributory way, if these histories are to be studied as literature, *i e*, as artistic tales of human weal and woe, works of art wrought out in words. As I understand our problem, then, we must consider two facts: (1) We have to deal with a series of immortal pictures of human life; (2) these pic-

tures are painted in words. What should we do? (1) We should at all hazards show our pupils that these pictures are instinct with life, that the figures are of real flesh and blood. To do this it is by no means necessary to convey to our pupils all that we ourselves see, or should see, in any given portrayal of life. The significance of that which was originally written for mature minds can, in most cases, be fully grasped only by minds of equal maturity. But Providence has happily ordained that enjoyment is possible even for one who does not know everything, and every one of the authors read in school and college has his own sure power to attract, if only we ourselves, by imaginative sympathy, make the tale, in its fundamental human elements, live. Do we actually strive for this as vitally necessary? I fear that, both in college and in school, we are too often like the historian of whom George Brandes speaks in his essay "On Reading". "I was sitting one evening", he says, "in a German university town, by the side of a little professor of history, when he informed me that he was at work on a book about Bothwell, the wild Scottish earl, Mary Stuart's lover, Darnley's murderer. I exclaimed involuntarily, with a glance at him, 'It must be very difficult for you (I meant for *you*) to enter into his feelings'. 'There is not the slightest occasion', he answered. 'I have all the documents'. We, too, have all the documents, and, having them, feel that we have all that is necessary. We teach devotedly, and often effectively, many things, but *not* the story and its power. (2) We must, at all hazards, make our pupils familiar with the materials out of which these pictures are fashioned, with the forms, meanings and uses of Latin words, as symbols of Roman ideas. We must, at all hazards, if we wish them to enjoy Latin, emancipate them from the Dictionary, and rescue them from a monster far worse than the dictionary, the "Literal Translation". There is now every prospect that we shall have before the end of next summer, Professor Lodge's Vocabulary, a book which will be of the utmost possible service in attaining this end. A brief discussion of the nature and *raison d'être* of this classified list (it will include about 2,000 words) was given by Dr Lodge in the *Nation* for August 30, 1906. I am personally quite convinced that the publication of this Vocabulary will make possible a long desired re-formulation of the entrance requirement in Latin.

The stress should undoubtedly be thrown on sight translation, as in French and German. Hitherto the test in sight translation has been in substance a lottery both for the school and for the college. Now, with a definite vocabulary to which the passages set in prose and poetry can be rigidly restricted, both school and college will have a definite standard. Let us make, then, the examination for admission to college chiefly an examination in sight translation of prose and poetry, and, in order to limit the range of the questions that may be asked upon the passages set, let us have prepared a syllabus of the fundamental elements of grammatical knowledge, a syllabus in its general character analogous to the syllabus in Mathematics, asked for by the Schoolmasters' Association of New York and Vicinity at its final meeting last spring. It seems unwise, however, to waive altogether the examination on prescribed matter. But, if one oration of Cicero and one book of Vergil, or, at the most, two orations of Cicero and two books of Vergil (I am now inclined to favor the smallest number, although, in a paper read before the New York Latin Club in February, 1904, I urged a larger amount) were set for this part of the examination, these selections, which would be complete in themselves, could be prepared as are now the books set for English *b* (Study and Practice). The oration of Cicero could be analyzed and studied in detail as is now Burke's speech "On Conciliation with America", and the book of Vergil, for instance, the Second Book of the Aeneid, which is a perfect tragedy in itself, could receive the same imaginative treatment which is now given to Macbeth. In thus reducing the amount of prescribed work, however, I by no means imply that the total amount read should be less than at present. It seems to me, on the contrary, that under the more favorable conditions it might be possible to read an even larger amount. But there would be this important difference, that instead of being compelled, as at present, to fit every class, however varying its capacity, to a Procrustean bed, the teacher might assume the responsibility of adapting the amount and character of the work done each year to the particular class that had to do that work.

After the Conference had adjourned, a number of the people in attendance remained, at the suggestion of the Chairman, to discuss the forming of a Classical Association of the Middle States and Maryland. Of the steps taken during this discussion, a fuller report will be given at another occasion.

## Constitution of the New York Latin Club

### ARTICLE I Name and Objects

1 This Society shall be known as THE NEW YORK LATIN CLUB.

2 Its objects shall be to encourage discussions, formal and informal, on any matters pertaining to classical study; to promote the interests of classical instruction; to establish one or more High School College Entrance Scholarships; and to publish a periodical devoted to the promotion of these objects.

### ARTICLE II Officers

1 The officers shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer and a Censor, who shall hold office for one year and be charged with the duties usually appertaining to such officers.

2 These officers shall constitute an Executive Committee, who shall be responsible for the direction of the affairs of the Club, the disposition of the funds, the awarding of the Scholarships, etc.

3 The election of officers shall occur at the May meeting of each year. The President shall appoint a nominating committee, who shall in turn appoint the officers for the ensuing year, subject to the approval of the Club.

### ARTICLE III Meetings

1 There shall be three meetings of the Club each year, the Annual Meeting in May and two others. These meetings shall be called by the President. Special meetings may be called by the Executive Committee.

2 Each meeting of the Club shall be characterized by at least one discussion, paper or other evidence of literary or professional activity on the part of some member or guest of the Club. The Censor shall be responsible for provision for this feature of the work.

### ARTICLE IV Membership

1 Membership in the Club may be either Active, Honorary or Life.

2 Any one may become an Active Member who receives the nomination of the Executive Committee, signs the constitution and pays the membership fee.

3 Any one can become an Honorary Member who receives the nomination of the Executive Committee and subscribes to the New York High School College Entrance Scholarship Fund the sum of twenty-five dollars (payable at his option in five annual payments of five dollars each).

4 Any one may become a Life Member who receives the nomination of the Executive Committee and subscribes to the New York High School College Entrance Scholarship Fund the sum of one hundred and twenty-five dollars (payable at his option in five annual payments of twenty-five dollars each).

5 The fee for Active Membership shall be two